

People share their stories of mental health recovery in work and life

panorama

Monthly Issue **May 2023 #89B**



Riding to Recovery: Cycling to Recycle

Gratitude: How I Stopped
Running From Myself

The Chance of a Lifetime:
Photographing
WorldPride 2023

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About us

Flourish Australia is committed to walking beside people with a lived experience of mental health issues as they progress along their recovery journeys. We passionately believe in mental health recovery, and are committed to providing the best possible support and encouragement to people so they can achieve their recovery goals. We offer this help across all 70+ of our services in New South Wales, Southern Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and Victoria.

Contact Flourish Australia!

1300 779 270 or
flourishaustralia.org.au

Chair: Prof Elizabeth More AM
Chief Executive Officer: Mark Orr AM
Chief Development Officer: Peter Neilson

About Panorama

Founded in 1996 in one of Flourish Australia's predecessor organisations (PRA), Panorama has grown to become a lifestyle magazine dedicated to informing and encouraging the recovery journey of readers. Panorama is written, designed and produced almost entirely by people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

The faces behind Panorama...



Warren Heggarty



Grant Everett

Subscriptions, questions, feedback, praise, curses?

You can ALWAYS email us at...

panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au
Warren.Heggarty@flourishaustralia.org.au
Grant.Everett@flourishaustralia.org.au

Prefer snail mail?

Publications Officers, Quad 3, Level 3,
Suite 3.01, 102 Bennelong Parkway, Sydney
Olympic Park NSW 2127

Disclaimer

Panorama's content is not intended as a substitute for the advice of any specialised or qualified professional. The views expressed herein are those of the authors, not necessarily of Flourish Australia, or any associated enterprises, their staff, management, employees, or service recipients

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PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY

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Contributors include...

Shannon Jones accesses Flourish Australia's Caboolture, Queensland service. She is a member of the Community Advisory Council.

Kristy Mounsey has accessed Flourish Australia services, and has recently achieved a HUGE personal milestone

Penny Gulliver is the founder of Newtown Martial Arts

Edwina Keelan has been learning kickboxing from Penny

Danny Dalton is an Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Trainee at Flourish Australia's Tamworth service

Contributions are welcome!

Publications People

Grant J Everett writing

Kylie Bolton graphic design

Warren Heggarty writing

Tina Irving story editor

Fay Jackson
General Manager, Inclusion

Jasmin Moradides
Development Projects Manager



Inspire
YOUR
Community
WITH YOUR STORY

You don't need to be a writer to share your story with Panorama's readers: we can help you to write your story. We especially like recovery stories from people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

Email us at: panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Flourish Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, sea and waterways upon which we live and work.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and recognise their strong and continuing connection to land, culture and spirit.

Panorama magazine would like to acknowledge all people who live with a mental health issue, as well as those who encourage and support loved ones. Our universal right to lead full and inclusive lives is the driving force behind why Panorama exists. We also acknowledge the strength it can take to share our stories. The impact of reading about people's journeys cannot be overstated. Sharing our experiences has the potential to change lives and we hope by reading true recovery stories, it gives hope, optimism and support to our readers, especially those on their mental health recovery journey.



FAMILY & CARERS

At Flourish Australia, we understand the important role many families and carers play in supporting someone with a lived experience of a mental health issue to stay well and part of their local community.

When someone comes to us and asks for support we discuss with them the involvement of their family and other important people in their lives, and what supports they provide. If we are able to obtain that information we will record it so our staff know who is important to the person and their recovery. We will also make contact with you to check what supports you may need to undertake your important role and discuss your involvement and communication preferences.

Other Organisations

Sometimes families and carers want more information and other contacts. There are a range of organisations that provide specialist supports and information for carers. A list with contact details can be found on our website at: www.flourishaustralia.org.au/family-and-carers

Mental Health Carers NSW Ph: 1300 554 660

Arafmi Queensland Ph: (07) 3254 1881

Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network Ph: 1300 620 042

Mental Health Carers Australia Ph: 1300 554 660

Kids Helpline Ph: 1800 551 800

COPMI – Children of Parents with Mental Illness: www.copmi.net.au



Riding to Recovery:

Cycling to Recycle

'Having a disability can only hold you back so far' says David Mortimer. Not only does he have a vision that will be a plus for the community, but he has a track record of doing the networking and the work necessary to bring it about. We don't think disability will hold him back very much at all!

His main idea involves taking people in nursing homes on outings.

Anyone who has been in a nursing home or who has a relative in one will know how valuable and how crucial it is for residents to have opportunities to go out and about. Not having a drivers' licence is not a problem for David, because he has looked at a better mode of transport, one that they use all the time in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Before we look at the 'Copenhagen solution' we need to look at David

and his electric bikes. 'I saved up really hard to get my bikes' says David who works with Flourish Australia's Business Services based at Marrickville, NSW where he is part of our lawn maintenance team. In addition to mental health issues, David is completely deaf in one ear and has only partial hearing in the other. He needs to use a hearing aid.

This disability has contributed to him experiencing trauma as a child which has effected his mental health in later life.

Previously, David worked at Port Botany where he operated a two storey Omega forklift. 'I started with a normal forklift course and then increased my experience. It is a very long process that took me 12 years, Safety is paramount. You have to really know what you are doing before you can be left to operate it unsupervised.'

At present, he has a mountain bike which puts out 250W and a

'Copenhagen bike' which has 500W of power. David does not need to have a licence or registration for them. That is because they are not motorbikes as such but pushbikes with the added convenience of small electric motors. It's a bit like a hybrid motor car, only lighter, cheaper and even better for the environment.

Not to mention more fun.

'The mountain bike is "pedal assisted" and can only do 27 kilometers an hour. Then the power shuts off.' Now you can see why it is not classed as a motorbike. 'The Copenhagen has a throttle as well as pedal assist but because it is built for carrying loads it does not go any faster.'

'I love the freedom I have found through these bikes. I am able to go places now and help other people out. I want to see other people buying electric bikes too!'

Return and Earn

David supplements his income by collecting bottles from bins under the Return and Earn scheme run by the NSW Government. On a good week he might make an extra \$30, but before you get any ideas of joining him in the recycling business, think again.

Not only does he have the Copenhagen bike to help him but he has done some networking. For example he has approached building caretakers and others and negotiated 'giving them a helping hand with the recycling.'

Another regular gig he has is that he knows a group of people in Glebe who like to meet for a drink regularly. 'When they finish, they text me to come and pick their empty bottles up for recycling!'

David also collects copper, which nowadays is actually quite valuable. 'One source of copper is in electrical cabling. I have a friend who knows a lot of tradies and got the message out that when they need to throw out some old power chords, they can pass it on to me and I'll take care of them!'

'Everything is going up now' he laments, 'so it is good to have a few extra dollars. Doing the recycling collection also helps me to get better mentally and physically.'

'Riding around like I do, I find I smoke a lot less. I've noticed the health benefits over the past 12 months.'

Ultimately, David wants to perform a service for aged care residents.

'Before COVID came along I saw an item on the TV where there was an organisation that took the elderly for rides using the Copenhagen style of bike. I was thinking that if I got one, other people might join me. I spoke about it to my chemist and he said he'd support me. The thought of being able to provide a community service like that is so cool!'

The Three Wheeled Dream

No great idea is without its challenges though.

'If you want to take people around from a nursing home, you need to have a THREE WHEELER Copenhagen bike. Now my mountain bike that I saved up for cost me \$1,890. But the three

wheeler I need will set me back \$12,000. If I had that money I'd buy one right now!'

David is conscious that the safety and welfare of elderly people is paramount. After all, he used to work in aged care as a personal care assistant/caretaker at the Shalom Nursing Home in Epping.

'It is very important that anyone doing this sort of work with vulnerable people has a full police check.

He says that he takes his bikes very seriously. 'I look after them. I am especially careful with maintaining the brakes.'

'I would really love to make this idea a reality. I can just imagine the conversations! Picnics, being out in mother nature. Not too fast, not too slow.'

David would like to see a society where people are not sidelined because of disability or old age. He likes the idea of everyone in the community mixing together to help one another.

Thanks to Karina Kouck for her assistance with this story.



TOP LEFT: David saved hard to afford this two wheeler electric bike, but he needs a three wheeler to meet the challenge of his dream! INSET: It is tiny but it does the job. Why spend big on an electric car when you can have the freedom of a pedal-electric bike? ABOVE: David displays a couple of Return and Earn vouchers. They provide him with a modest supplementary income in these inflationary times. PHOTOS BY WARREN HEGGARTY

World Wellbeing Week 2023: How do YOU Define Your Wellbeing?

By Grant J Everett



Living through a pandemic has made taking care of our wellbeing more important than ever. But despite COVID's many obstacles, we've proven we can adjust to huge, unprecedented challenges, developing new levels of resilience along the way.

World Wellbeing Week runs 26-30 June, and it's an opportunity to assess how we're all travelling. Social media will provide opportunities to get involved during this week, so stay connected to see how you can take part.

World Wellbeing Week is also an opportunity to thank the health workers, carers, charities and organisations who have nurtured the welfare of so many in these terribly interesting times.

You Are Unique

Our wellbeing is composed of many factors, including our physical, mental and emotional health, our relationships with others, having a connection with our community, doing meaningful things, and more.

However, "wellbeing" can be defined differently from person to person: for instance, it might mean feeling satisfied in life, or to feel in control, or it could revolve around our relationships with others.

Regardless, our wellbeing can be positively or negatively affected by many things in life. If you'd like to see if there are any areas you may want to work on, ask yourself...

- Am I optimistic about my future?
- Do I feel useful?
- Is it easy to relax?
- Am I socially connected?
- Do I have enough energy?
- Do I cope well with problems?
- Can I think clearly and concentrate?
- Do I feel loved?
- Am I interested in new things?
- Do I feel cheerful?

Don't worry if you had a number of negative answers to that list! To make positive changes in life, we need to know where to start.

Feeling Our Best

Healthy relationships are fundamental to living a full life, and the people we choose to be around affect our sense of belonging and self-worth, providing a source of emotional support, giving us an opportunity to share new experiences, and allows us to offer these benefits to others. With travel getting easier, 2023 could be the ideal time to reconnect with your network.

Exercise is great for your physical and mental health. It raises your self-esteem, helps you to set and achieve goals, and releases pleasurable brain chemicals that uplift your mood. Importantly, exercising helps with our quality of sleep, which is vital to our functioning.

Learning new skills or finding a hobby boosts your confidence and self-esteem, providing a sense of purpose. You could try a YouTube recipe, add a novel to your bedside table, or join a local Men's Shed.

Acts of kindness are rewards in themselves, offering feelings of purpose and self-worth. This could mean helping somebody in need, or volunteering in your local community. And don't forget to be kind to yourself!

Live in the moment! Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and senses. This mindfulness can positively change the way we view our experiences. Of course, sometimes it may be helpful to do the exact opposite, to take a break from our current struggles, so distraction can have value, too.

Eating a healthy, balanced, nutritionally dense diet will provide you with the fuel you need to live life, and the strength to work on all the other items on this list.

Don't Panic

While our wellbeing may fluctuate, the key is to make your low moments as infrequent as possible. If you feel you are having more low than high moments, talking to someone you trust can be helpful.

IMAGE: Doing yoga is one way we can look after our wellbeing. PHOTO FROM PIXABAY

Managing Diabetes

How Our BOTH Program Helps!

By Warren Heggarty



The incidence of Diabetes in Australia has tripled in the past 20 years. At the moment 1,470,000 Australians have this condition. (Robinson, 2022) The majority have Type 2 which is the form related to being overweight and lacking exercise. In the long term, Diabetes can be very serious and unfortunately, it is quite prevalent among people with mental health issues and Indigenous communities. The good news is that there are things we can do to prevent, reverse or manage diabetes.

Last year, Diabetes Australia looked into the future and predicted that the number of people living with diabetes in Australia would double by 2050. Their 2022 report said 'it is a leading cause of (preventable) blindness, dementia, stroke, mental and emotional health challenges, heart and kidney disease' and so the cost to society will be enormous. That is why doctors have begun talking of a diabetes crisis and the need for a national action plan. (Robinson, 2022)

Jade Ryall, Flourish Australia's Program Manager of Back On Track Health said that Diabetes prevention is an important and regular part of

our interactions with the people who access our services.

One of the ways we are helping is by offering 'preventative Health Check-ins' to people. 'During the 2021-2022 Financial year, 2,128 people completed a preventative Health Check-in,' says Jade.

'Out of these 2,128 people, it was recommended that 116 (about five per cent) see a Diabetes Nurse/Educator.'

'The number of people who took up that recommendation and attended an appointment came to about 3.5%,' Jade said, 'so not all people who received recommendations and referrals reported actually attending appointments.'

Naturally we would like to encourage everyone who is at risk to take action and reduce their chance of developing diabetes. The fact that diabetes can often be prevented or sometimes reversed makes us even more keen!

It is good to see, though, that many people will take their own initiative to attend an appointment with a Diabetes Nurse/Educator. 20 additional people did this even without a referral, bringing the total to 136 throughout Flourish Australia. Jade laments, though, that the overall number of people attending

appointments with Diabetes Nurse/Educators has decreased over the last four years.

When you think about it, diabetes -or the risk of it- is not some isolated phenomenon, it is intimately tied up with mental health. The same things that can help with diabetes (eating better and doing exercise) are also beneficial for your mental health. Conversely, if NOT doing these things brings on diabetes then diabetes will effect your mental health, even before we factor in serious disability that may result from poorly managed diabetes.

Talk to your support worker. You can easily find out your risk of Type 2 Diabetes by using the AUSD Risk Assessment Tool.

More information: National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS)

1800 637 700

<https://www.ndss.com.au/about-the-ndss/contact-us/>

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IMAGE: A specialist diabetes nurse with a patient. If you are at risk, there is always something you can do to reduce your chance of ill health. PHOTO INTERNET

Gratitude in Action

How I Stopped Running From Myself

By Shannon Jones

“Gratitude makes us realise just how important the little things are and how lucky we are to be alive as our tomorrows are never promised”

It took years, but Shannon, who currently accesses Flourish Australia’s Caboolture, Queensland Service found what she had to do to bring about a change in her life and launch her recovery. The key ingredient was Gratitude.

In the year 2014, Between working three jobs, training twice a week and one or sometimes two soccer games on weekends my mental health rapidly declined. By July 2014 all I wanted to do was escape. Escape reality, escape my demanding life but most of all escape me. I wanted to run, which is what I had been doing my whole life. However the one thing I couldn’t run from was myself.

My thoughts, my emotions and my mental health.

Everything got too much and I did what I thought was best. I ran once again escaping reality that was my life in Brisbane. I found myself at the bottom of a cliff face after climbing and falling 15-20metres down the cliff. Breaking my back, neck and right foot and severely cutting my left foot open and cutting my fingers on my left hand. I tried to stand up as I was still conscious but my body wouldn’t allow me to. I was forced to stay still.

No more running for now.

I was found by two fishermen who called for help. Before long the helicopter winched me to safety and to the closest hospital. The surgeons had to preform an emergency

operation on my back. My back and neck were operated on separately as the surgeon thought the neck would heal on its own which wasn’t the case.

I had been in the general hospital for a couple of weeks healing and learning to walk again after surgery. That was until my mental state almost completely deteriorated and I had to be transferred to the Mental Health Hospital.

After my long stay in the mental health hospital, rather than returning to Brisbane I was flown back to my home town. This was because I couldn’t manage in Brisbane with a moon boot (a leg brace), a neck brace and still healing from the fall. I realise now that I wasn’t grateful. Back then, I did not realise what a blessing it was that I was able to

walk, or even simply to be alive. I didn't have gratitude in my heart. I was taking for granted the very fact that I wasn't in a wheel chair or that I didn't have a brain injury from the fall.

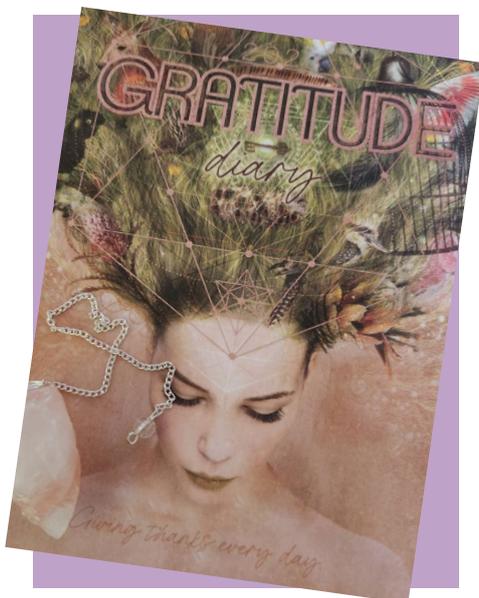
It took me seven or eight years after the fall in 2014 to finally be extremely grateful for everything in life including my healthy body. And also, for how far I have come on my recovery in the last 16 months being with Flourish Australia. Mental health is such an ongoing journey; I know that for myself my demons have been faced, and I am not perfect but we all have our own life stories. I have finally stopped running as I have found my home and that is with me in my heart. I'm grateful for my family and friends and the ongoing support of Caboolture Flourish Australia Service and everyone else who makes up my support team.

Questions on gratitude

Now, let me answer some questions you might be asking about gratitude itself.

What am I grateful for?

You need gratitude for the little things. Gratitude for waking up, gratitude when the weather is nice, gratitude for the trees because they give us oxygen. Gratitude for animals especially those that show us unconditional love.'



Why should we have gratitude for those little things?

Because when you take them for granted, they pass you by. You don't notice all these little things; and you don't realise how important they are. You have to deliberately think about them.'

How do I do that?

I have a Gratitude Journal (see picture above) which I write in before bed. I write down everything I can think of that I am grateful for. I write paragraphs or even a whole page. It changes each day, though there are some things that are always on the list, such as family and friends.'

What if I don't?

'If there is a day when I don't write much, when I didn't feel so grateful, I will ask myself WHY wasn't I grateful on that day? So, I can use the journal to monitor my wellness!'

The Council

I am a member of the Flourish Australia Community Advisory Council, and in March I participated in one of their bi-annual meetings. I enjoy being a part of the Council. It's very rewarding, and it feels like the voices of the Council members, and the people who access Flourish Australia services, are really heard.

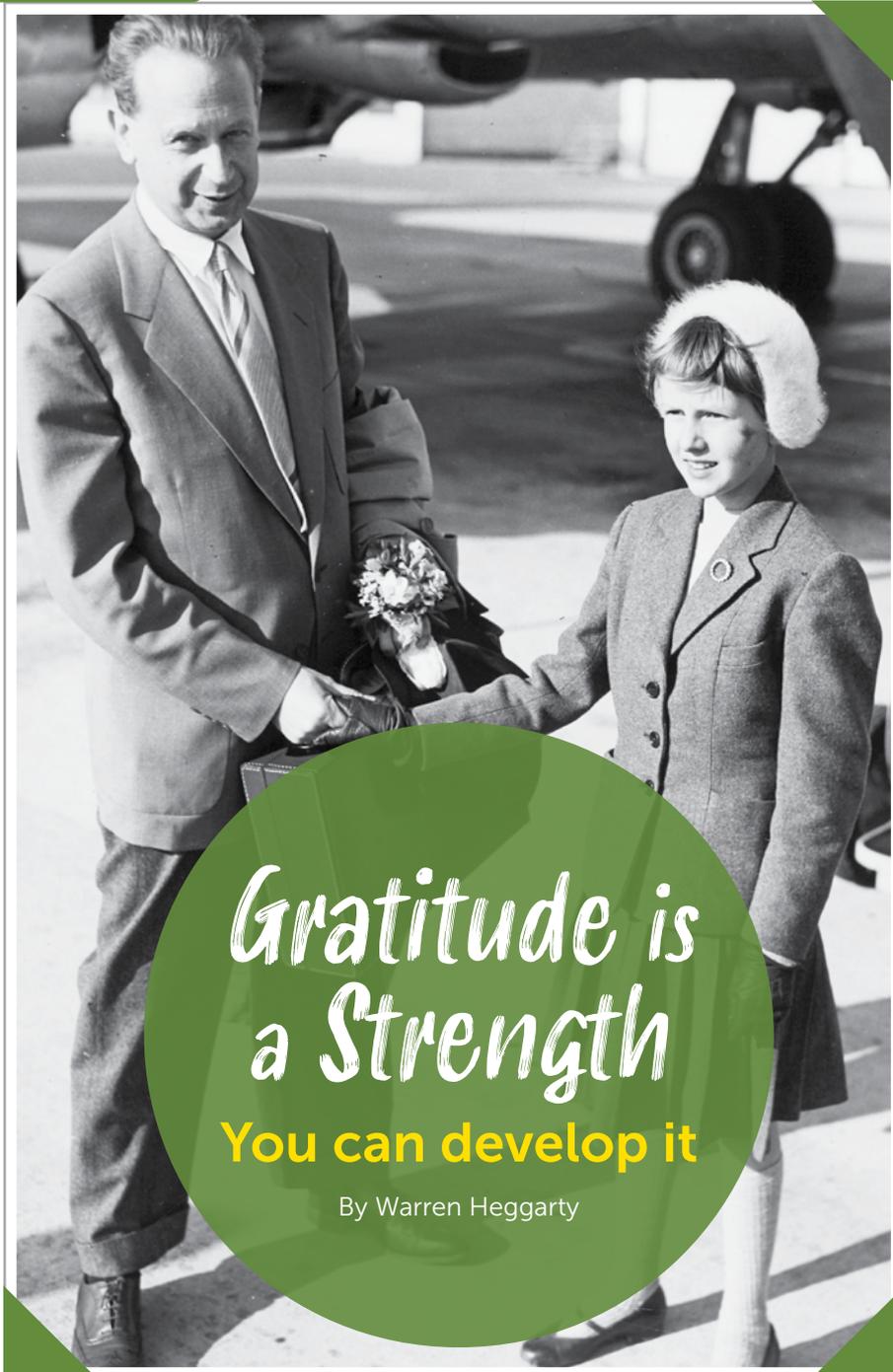
I have to say, and I really mean it, I'm not just saying this, that Flourish Australia have been outstanding. They've helped me so much. I had a lot of trust issues at first, based on my previous experience of mental health services. But I decided to let go a bit and give Flourish Australia a try.

They have been great giving me emotional support and mental health support. I love how they operate. It is great working with peer workers. Knowing that they themselves have a background of mental health issues is good because it means that they can relate to my experience, even if it is a different type of issue they might have had.

**Flourish Australia
CABOOLTURE**
Office 1, Ground Floor
33 King Street
Caboolture
QLD 4510
1300 779 270



ABOVE LEFT: Shannon Jones at the March 2023 Community Advisory Council. PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY. OPPOSITE: Shannon in a neck brace with her eldest sister who had to make a lot of decisions on her behalf after the injuries. PHOTO PROVIDED BY SHANNON JONES



Gratitude is a Strength

You can develop it

By Warren Heggarty

Gratitude is a strength. It is a deliberate acceptance of what you have as opposed to what you don't have. You need gratitude because it will help you overcome obstacles in your life.

When we're sick or injured or in pain, all that we want is to be well again. As is our nature, though, once we've recovered from whatever we're struggling with, it's only a matter of time until we take our good health for granted again.

Can you remember a time when you were sick or terribly inconvenienced. 'I wish I wasn't in so much pain!'

'I wish the train wasn't an hour late!' 'I wish my nose wasn't running so much...' Complaint comes naturally enough. But as shown in the story by Shannon in this edition of Panorama, gratitude is more difficult to foster- for most of us anyway.

You need therefore to be deliberate about it. This is where Shannon's gratitude journal comes in. She deliberately chooses to recall and write down the little things for which she is grateful.

It is now fashionable to see gratitude as a 'key value.' Fashion is often not a good guide in life, but on this occasion, fashion is spot on.

John Carroll (renowned author and Emeritus Professor of Sociology at La Trobe University, Melbourne) says that a grateful temper might be taken as the clearest index of social and emotional wellbeing. He says that cheerfulness is indeed a beautiful quality because it implies gratitude.

But how long has it been since most people had a regular gratitude ritual. An example would be 'saying grace.' 'For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful.'

And how is it that, when we are beset by troubles, we should nevertheless be grateful. Grateful for what? Is gratitude or cheerfulness something which is denied people who go through difficult times? Again, Shannon's story explains how gratitude helped her even after many years of difficulty.

John Carroll says 'The [Ancient] Greeks responded to their suffering at the hands of fickle destiny with hair-raising cheerfulness, and gratitude for life despite all.' With such an attitude, these Ancient Greeks might have supposed that a 'lack of gratitude shows disrespect for life and for all that has been given.' Is that not taking it all a bit far?

There are people throughout history who have taken the attitude that they at least try to show gratitude even for **HARDSHIP**. This is because they realise that through hardship they will be determined to learn valuable lessons or to help others.

Former United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld is an example of such a spirit of gracious public service. He once said 'To all that has been, thanks! To all that shall be, Yes!'

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ABOVE: Dag Hammarskjöld shown in the 1950s with a relative Una-Stina. Born into privilege, he was devoted to public service until his death in a plane crash while on a peace mission as UN Secretary General PHOTO SAS Scandinavian Airways Public Domain

IMAGE: Ah! The tool kit.
Now where did I put that
darn darned needle?
PHOTO WARREN
HEGGARTY



BUILD IT! SEW IT!

And Feel Good About It

By Warren Heggarty

All children were born to build things. Little girls and boys play with blocks, and later, they grow up to lay bricks or engineer rockets. Regardless of your gender, perhaps embarking on your own private building or sewing program will help your recovery? There is only one way to find out.

Did you hear about the world record breaking Sunswift 7 electric car. It travelled over 1,000km at an average of 85km per hour in 11 hours and 52 minutes. But it is not one of Elon's Tesla babies! It was designed built and maintained by engineering students at the University of New South Wales in Kensington NSW. And the number 7 indicates they had a few goes at it before getting it to this level of brilliance. Persistence!

Just think, those students probably started out playing vroom vroom with their HOT WHEELS TM Porche 911s in the sandpit. Now they have created something that may well outlive that august marque.

Seriously, building things with your hands makes you feel better because that is one of the things

were are built to do. Build things. Make things. Cook, sew, saw hammer.

Do an online search "every man should build something" for an interesting article by a combat veteran called 'Hoodl'm' who gives his version of why this is so.

In summary, all people have a creative side and a side which likes to learn things and figure things out. This can fade with age, but Hoodl'm recommends that everyone should have a 'shop' meaning a shed or a place where they can work on stuff and figure things out.

Building things can be a social activity. When Hoodl'm built his first 'shop' he roped in some fellow combat veterans to help out. No doubt they would debrief each day's work over a few refreshing glasses of lemonade. They also learned stuff off one another. (Hoodl'm, 2018)

If building stuff doesn't sound like your cup of tea, try sewing and tailoring clothing. Like building stuff, sewing stuff is about developing skills, learning how to operate machinery, how to follow plans and in the end creating a beautiful whatever-it-is of your very own.

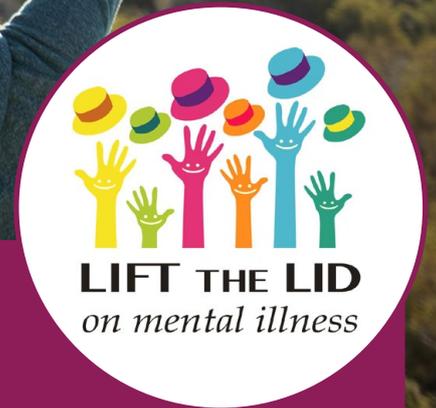
Other advantages to sewing include saving money on repairs and new clothing, having an outlet for your creativity (if you can't draw a straight line, you may be able to sew one). Cassie Steele from Stitch and Sew website says sewing can 'make you feel calm and happy as you get to spend your free time in a productive and creative way. Sewing also keeps your mind active as you constantly learn while you're taking on a new project. Having an active mind keeps your brain healthy...' (Theobald, 2021)

Why not enquire about doing a beginners course at a local continuing education centre or at TAFE. Ask your friends about THEIR hobbies and what they involve. Maybe you have harboured a secret desire for model trains or crochet mittens. Now is the time to unleash the doer within!

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Lifting the Lid

With Help from Rotary and Guiding!

By Warren Heggarty

Australian Rotary Health, provides funding towards research grants, fellowships and scholarships focussed on finding solutions to mental health issues in young Australians. This work is more important than ever and Rotary calls it 'Lift the Lid on Mental Illness.' Panorama spoke to program director Cheryl Deguara about the great work being done.

Australian Rotary Health is a project of the Rotary Districts of Australia and is supported by Rotary Clubs.

Sharpening the Focus

Since the year 2000, Australian Rotary Health has focused its funding on mental health research. In 2012 this focus narrowed to the Mental Health of Young Australians, and in 2013 research projects focussing on the Prevention of Mental Health Disorders were included. From 2022, the funding focus narrowed to the mental health of children aged from birth to 12 years old.

This is in line with Australian Rotary Health's aim provides funding into areas of health that do not readily attract funding,

There are three ways they fund mental health research:

1. Mental Health Research Grants
2. Ian Scott PhD Scholarships
3. Postdoctoral Fellowships

If you are interested in learning exactly how this money is spent, you can find a series of over fifty podcasts on Australian Rotary Health's web site which go in to detail. There are also many articles which put the research 'under the microscope' so that donors can read about the results of their gifts.

https://australianrotaryhealth.org.au/research/under_the_microscope-research_findings/

Rotary is a voluntary organisation. Cheryl is both a volunteer Rotarian AND a paid staff member, so in that sense she wears two hats.

Volunteering is a two-way street, a sharing of lived experience, according to Cheryl. In volunteering to help another person, we help

ourselves -' it gets both people through.'

'My background is in Guiding.' Cheryl says. 'I started Guiding in England where I attained the Queen's Guide Award at age 13. When I came to Australia I continued Guiding, including as a Leader and a Commissioner. My children have continued the tradition. It's a great way to give something back to the community.'

'Guiding is being able to help young people build resilience and life skills. It has quite a bit of outdoor focus, including camps. You get to build gadgets out of timber and learn knotting and how to problem solve. These are all fundamental skills that take you to the next level. The skills transfer into other areas of life. An example might be moving house.' Yes, many people find moving house to be quite a nightmare. But Cheryl says that skills learned in the Guides help you through.

'Young people have lost those arts nowadays. They are inclined to get someone else to do the job for them. There is less thinking for

yourself, less self-reliance, these days and so when people are faced with complex issues it can be a bit traumatising.'

'My daughters did Guiding and found that the skills learned there were often transferable into Primary School teaching. So I think that teachers who do not have a background in something like the Guides are missing out on something!'

Around the year 2000, Australian Rotary Health began to focus its work on General mental health. From 2000 to 2006 Fay Jackson, who is now Flourish Australia's General Manager, Inclusion, worked with Cheryl. 'We did in excess of 600 forum presentations about mental health between 2000 and 2006. Our main concern then was to break down stigma. We provided a friendly platform where people could ask questions.'

Over time, the focus has sharpened. In 2013 Australian Rotary Health began to concentrate on preventive mental health. In 2022, a symposium was held to determine how best to make an impact and they decided to concentrate the effort on children aged from 0 to 12 years. The aim is to put resilience in place as early as possible. 'Not just

children but for the whole family. This cannot be neglected. You may be a carer, but you have to look after yourself as well, otherwise you will have two people with problems.'

Following the symposium, a large number of Expressions of Interest were received by Australian Rotary Health. A panel of Experts in psychology, psychiatry and other fields then went through the EOIs and whittled them down to 50 contenders who were then asked to make full applications. Of those thirteen were chosen.

In making its grants, Australian Rotary Health was mindful the research needed to be geared towards the long term and towards ideas that can be built upon later. Most of the programs are up to three years in duration and are fully budgeted.

Indigenous and remote

Another area which Cheryl oversees is the 80 Rotary Indigenous Health Scholarships throughout Australia,. These are for indigenous people who are doing degrees in areas like public health, dentistry, medicine and nursing. Candidates are co-sponsored by both state and Commonwealth governments. An alumni group is being put together at present.

'One successful candidate had left school in year 10. With support, he went on to become a podiatrist and later became a professor at Griffith University,' says Cheryl. 'He has also become a father five times over and is now a grandfather!'

Rural and remote medicine and nursing are fields with ongoing shortages. Cheryl says that Rotary helps by sponsoring a year long elective rural area posting for doctors, but it is a long game. 'We expect it to take ten years on average for this sort of program to pay off. Then there is the one year post graduate rural nursing program. 'Some country hospitals have to make do with a single nurse on duty over night,' says Cheryl. 'There is a lot to be done and organisations like Rotary are doing it!'



Cheryl Deguara



Edwina

KICKING FOR GOLD

By Penny Gulliver and Edwina Keelan (as told to Grant J Everett)

Penny: I am the founder of GLMA Martial Arts, and we have many students from the LGBTQIA+ community, including people

who are transgender. I have been Edwina's teacher, her Sifu, for about 18 months.

I organised the recent Sydney WorldPride Martial Arts Championships tournament as a part of the Sydney World Pride Sports Festival at The Rocks, a free event sponsored by The City Of Sydney Council in partnership with the International Association Of Gay and Lesbian Martial Artists. Transmen and Transwomen participated, making this tournament the first of its kind, and we have plans to go to the Gay Games in Hong Kong in November.

Edwina: At the tournament I won gold for my age group in sparring and fighting, bronze for mixed sparring or fighting, and gold for

kata one or forms, mixing the Waiata Maori Haka and Chinese Kung Fu. There were a lot of tears when I won my first gold!

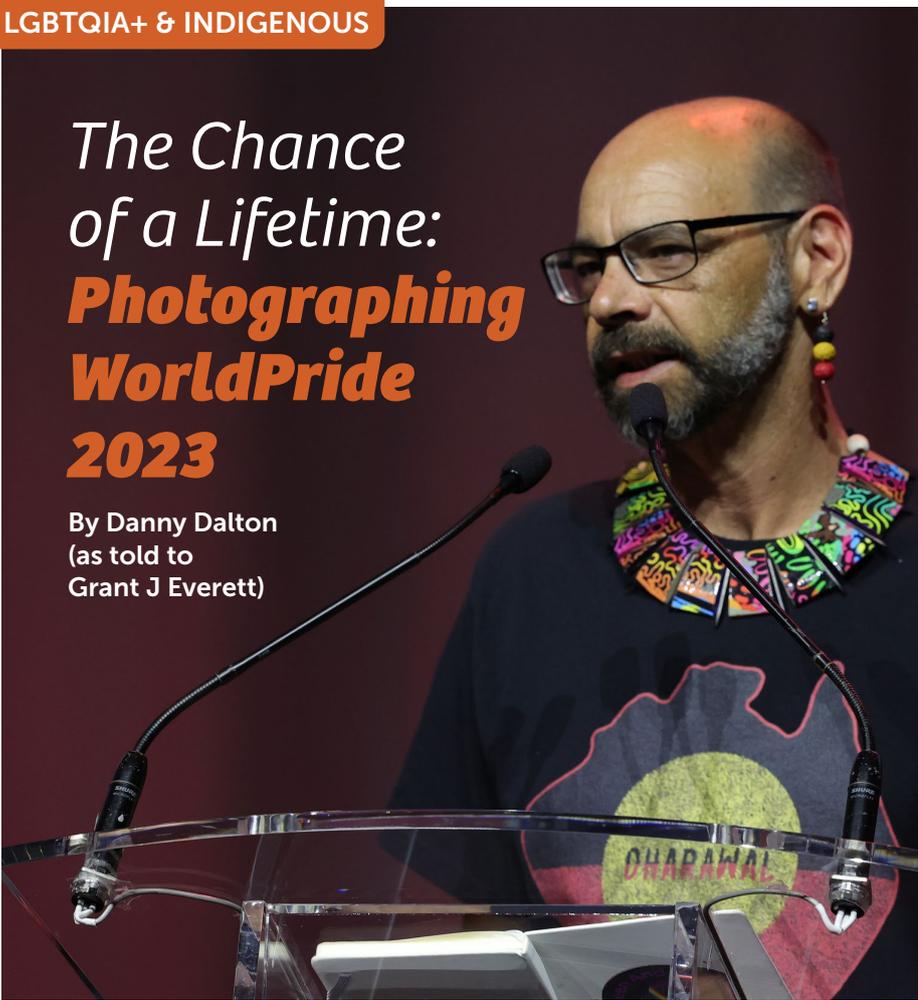
Penny: Edwina did extremely well in the sparring and forms. And incorporating the Haka was a treat for everyone!

Penny has been boxing since 1975, when it was still considered a man's sport, and was one of the original 78ers who marched in the first Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to protest police brutality. She founded the first rape crisis centre in Glebe, and is a published author on self-defence. She has appeared on A Current Affair and 60 minutes.

Martial arts can be great for your physical, mental and emotional health, so why not give it a go?

The Chance of a Lifetime: Photographing WorldPride 2023

By Danny Dalton
(as told to
Grant J Everett)



Danny Dalton, the youngest ever chairperson to sit on Tamworth's Aboriginal Land Council and an employee of Flourish Australia's Tamworth service, received a scholarship to be a First Nations Scholar at the Sydney WorldPride Human Rights Conference for 2023.

It started by telling some of my Aboriginal friends about how much I'd love to photograph WorldPride events. I'm usually a sport's photographer, and with that you can usually just go to a game and start taking pictures, but you need special permission to cover WorldPride.

This led to answering a facebook post from the organisation BlaQ, who were looking for a photographer to shoot their annual Mardi Gras After Party. They liked my work so much that they gave me the scholarship. I then managed to call the right person on the right day at the right time to apply for accreditation to also cover the Pride March, the Mardi Gras, and the Blak and Deadly Red Carpet event at Sydney Opera House, and to my amazement I got it! As these

opportunities usually go to huge organisations like the Australian Associated Press or Getty, this was an amazing chance to increase the visibility of LGBTQIA+ First Nations' people.

And not only was I granted this incredible opportunity, but the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations also covered my travel and accommodation costs. I'm still blown away by all this!

Coverage

My scholarship included a three-day pass to the WorldPride Human Rights Conference. Like when I went to the World Indigenous Conference on Education, I attended every presentation that interested me, and I was excited to meet so many interesting and inspiring people in the breakout rooms.

I greatly enjoyed photographing VIPs on the red carpet for "Blak and Deadly: The First Nations Concert" at the Sydney Opera House, as I'd never done a red carpet event before. I also had a ticket to walk in the Pride March, which is something you usually have to win in a lottery.

I've since provided many of my photos to BlaQ and Flourish Australia in order to get them maximum exposure.

A 43-year understanding

To be a part of the WorldPride Human Rights Conference, you have to answer questions about your activism within your culture, and I shared a lot about myself. I'm 47 this year, and for the first 43 years of my life I identified as asexual, even before I knew there was a word for it. It's hard to be accepted as asexual because people just don't understand not having any attraction. Some people actually think the "A" in LGBTQIA+ stands for "Allies." And they're like, "I thought that was us!" So I tell them to go and Google "asexuality" and get back to me.

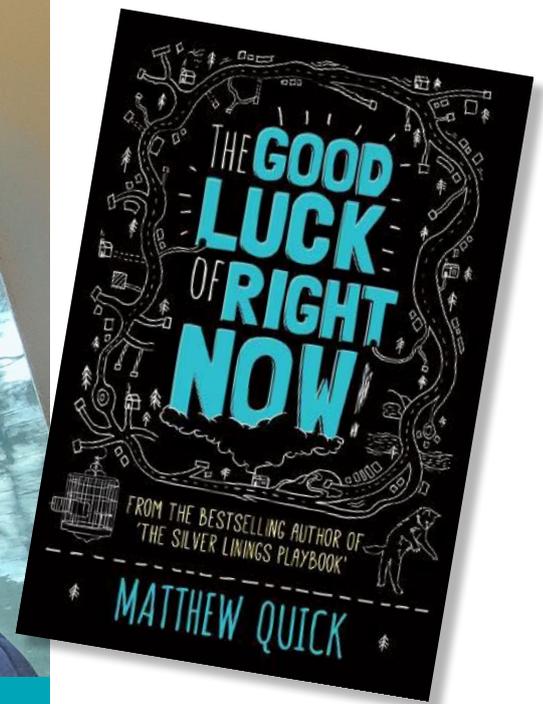
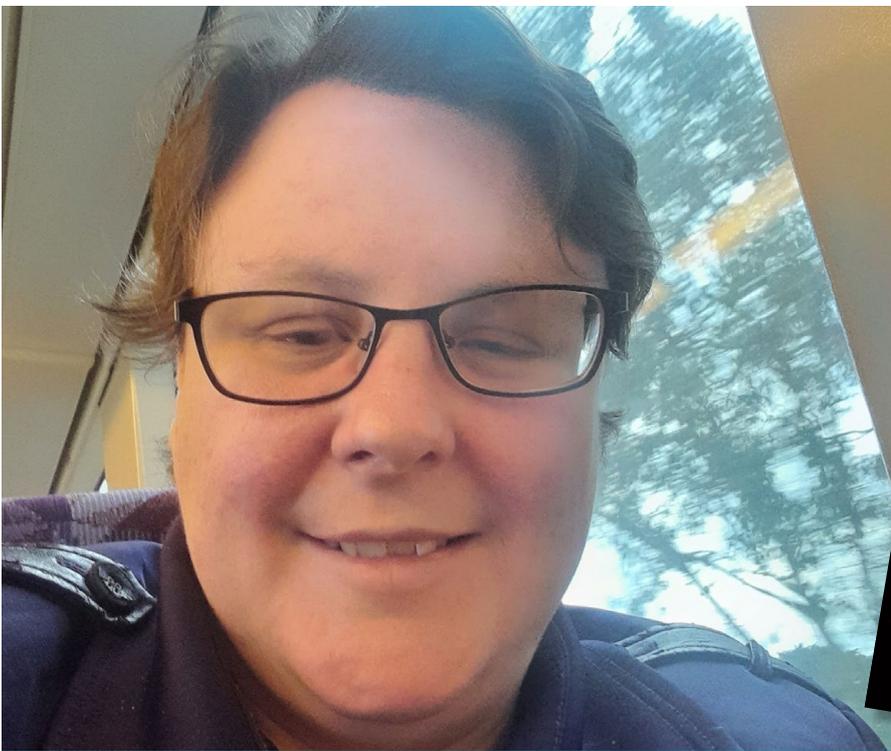
However, a few years back I met a guy online. After many long conversations I decided to visit him in Dubai. We began a relationship, and I now identify as a gay man. I'm happy with being gay, but now I have to deal with emotions and jealousy and stuff like that.

For a long time, nobody asked me about my sexuality, but they were certainly making enough assumptions! If you've never had a serious girlfriend by 40, people will start asking questions. I've found most people will define you as either gay or straight, and won't even believe in bisexuality as a third option, let alone accepting a FOURTH category!

I've been on a steep learning curve, but I am the beneficiary of people my age fighting the good fight. When I came out at 43, same-sex marriage was already legal, and I've had no real struggles as a gay man. I never faced the prospect of being rejected by my family, and they've actually been very accepting of this news.

The main reason I wanted to attend the Human Rights Conference was so I could share my story in a major forum. I never struggled with my identity or my sexuality, I am who I am, and I don't apologise for it. I wouldn't have life any other way.

ABOVE: Ross Fowler, Bidigal Dharawal Nation, from day three of the WorldPride Human Rights Conference PHOTO BY DANNY DALTON



BOOK REVIEW: The Good Luck of Right Now (Matthew Quick)

By Kristy Mounsey (as told to Grant J Everett)

The main character of *The Good Luck of Right Now* lives with his mother until he is thirty-nine, and when she dies he has to face the world without her support for the first time. All the characters in the book were very well fleshed out and unique, and there is some black comedy.

The main reason I picked up this novel is because the author also wrote *Silver Linings Playbook*, which I adore, but I had no idea I'd like this book as much as I did. While I've only read this novel once, it's had more of an impact on me than almost any other book. When I first started reading it, though, I had to put it down halfway, as it was too close to home for me. Like the main character, I have a disability, and I was living with my parents at forty one. However, I think books that don't challenge us don't have as much of an impact on the reader, and this was a fantastic read in that it challenged me to look at my life and try for more.

I think this book could be great for adults with a disability who are still living at home, as well as their parents. While it's a bit of a tough read, I think it really has the potential to motivate readers to think more about their independence. Because one day, everyone will have to face the world without their parents. If I could encourage parents with an adult child with a disability to read one fiction book, this is it.

While this book was an uncomfortable read for me, as it speaks so much to my personal experience, it made me realise I couldn't live at home forever, so it motivated me to try and move out again.

Finding Home

I couldn't get a rental in Sydney no matter how hard I tried, and it wasn't even a money issue a lot of the time. The rental market is very difficult at the moment, and there simply aren't enough properties to meet demand. It was very frustrating.

It felt like there was nothing I could do, that I'd continue to be stuck living at home well into my 40s. However, in November 2021 I decided to move to Melbourne. I didn't even know what suburb I was heading to, just so long as it was within range of my friend's home. I put in a rental application in February 2022, and to my great surprise I had a place within two days! It's a bit of a dump, but it's in the greatest location I could ask for: walking distance to the library, high street, train station, tram station, buses...

This is the first time I've lived away from my parents, so I've had to be brave. But nothing ventured, nothing gained! Fortunately, unlike the main character in the book, I found my own place while my parents were still alive, in part because of reading his story.

It's been over a year since I moved to Melbourne, and having my own place has provided me with a sustained feeling of happiness for longer than ever before. Thanks in part to a lot of support from family and friends (who I still fly up to Sydney to visit), moving to Melbourne has been really positive for me.

The Good Luck of Right Now, and Matthew Quick's other award winning novels, are available in all good bookshops both online and bricks-and-mortar.

YOUR JOURNEY TO EMPLOYMENT

Every year **1 in 5** Australians will experience **some form of mental health issue.**

Flourish Australia provides mental health specialised disability employment services (DES) supporting people living with a mental health issue to access sustainable employment.

Flourish Australia DES locations:

Bankstown • Broken Hill • Caringbah • Cessnock • Harris Park
Hornsby • Liverpool • Maitland • Penrith • Seven Hills

To see if you qualify for our free service, please call us for a confidential discussion or visit our website for more information.

☎ (02) 9393 9000
✉ des@flourishaustralia.org.au
📍 flourishaustralia.org.au